

System Is Found Alienating 41%

By Louis Harris

One abiding condition that remains unsolved as 1972 draws to a close is the fact that over four in 10 Americans, 41 per cent, still feel largely alienated toward the system under which they live. While down from a record 48 per cent who felt disenchanted in early September, current levels of alienation are still a full 10 points above the levels of 1966.

Here are key signs that the mood of alienation is still running deep in the country:

- A substantial 64 per cent still agrees with the statement that "Tax laws are written to help the rich and not the average man." This most widely held complaint declined from a high of 74 per cent last May.

- The old shibboleth that "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer" finds 61 per cent in agreement, although the number tapered off 7 points from a high of 68 per cent in May.

- Despite all the courting of voters that went on during the recent campaign, 46 per cent still feel that "What I think doesn't really count much," down from 53 per cent who felt the same way in May, but still coming to nearly one in every two Americans.

- Over one in three, 36 per cent, feel that "People with power are out to take advantage of me," down from a high of 43 per cent in early September.

- The number who say they feel "left out of things around me" comes to 18 per cent, down 7 points from the 25 per cent who felt the same way last May, but still double the 9 per cent who expressed similar feelings back in 1966.

- The sharpest decline was registered among those who feel "People running the country don't care what happens to people like me." This sentiment reached an all-time high of 50 per cent last May, but by early November had fallen off 11 points to 39 per cent. So at least some of the claims of candidates that they really care about the voters had some impact.

"Do you often tend to feel (read list) or not?"

	1972				
	Nov. Sept. May 1966				
Tax laws written to help rich not average man	64%	67%	74%	X%	
Rich get richer, poor get poorer	61	66	68	48	
What I think doesn't count much	46	50	53	39	
People running country don't care what happens to people like me	39	45	50	28	
People with power out to take advantage of me	36	43	38	X	
Feel left out of things around me	18	24	25	9	

X—Not asked in 1966.

When alienation is analyzed by key groups in the population, these types of people tend to feel most alienated: Young people under 30; people with incomes under \$5,000 a year; blacks, 69 per cent of whom feel alienated, and union members.

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